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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001272

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: BEJA CONGRESS DISSIDENTS SLAM BEJA LEADERSHIP,  
DECRY ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION

REF: KHARTOUM 1257

Classified By: A/CDA Mark Asquino, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: On August 18 poloff met with two individuals claiming to be part of a Port Sudan-based dissident faction of the Beja Congress that had opposed the signing of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA). They characterized the ESPA as a sham agreement that served only to improve relations between its broker, the Government of Eritrea and the Government of Sudan, at the expense of the Beja people. They rejected the leadership of the Eastern Front and Beja Congress establishment, asserting that the true representatives of the Beja people are overseas. They said that hazardous materials used in gold mining in the Ariab region were poisoning the local Beja community, which is prohibited from working at or even approaching the mine. They also urged USG support for efforts to bring the case of the January 2005 "Port Sudan Massacre" to the International Criminal Court. Poloff informed them that the USG is not a party to the ICC, but shared their concerns about marginalization and economic underdevelopment in the East. End Summary.

SHAM AGREEMENT  
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12. (C) On August 18 poloff met in Khartoum with Mohamed Mahmmoud and Ali Hamid of Port Sudan, who claimed to represent a dissident faction of the Beja Congress that had split off from the main body during negotiations of the ESPA. The reason for the split, they stated, was because Eastern Front coalition negotiator Musa Mohamed Ahmed failed to raise the issue of the "Port Sudan Massacre" at the talks in Asmara, as was previously agreed to by the Beja Congress. (Note: the Port Sudan Massacre refers to the January 29, 2005 incident in which Sudanese police and troops opened fire on Beja demonstrators in Port Sudan, killing at least 20 people. End Note.) Hamid stated that the ESPA was a sham agreement and served only to improve relations between the Government of Eritrea and the GOS. He claimed in that in return for Eritrea, s brokering the agreement, the GOS had agreed to stop providing a haven for the Eritrean Islamic Jihad movement and provide oil and food aid to Eritrea. The Beja are the "victims" of this arrangement, he said. He stated that furthermore, the Government of Eritrea does not want to see improvement in the lives of Sudanese Beja, for fear that their own Beja minority will demand the same benefits.

OUT OF TOUCH LEADERSHIP  
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13. (C) Hamid continued that the only thing the ESPA has achieved "is to put Musa Mohamed Ahmed in the Presidential Palace" as Assistant to the President. He claimed that his time spent in Khartoum has put Ahmed woefully out of touch with the plight of the Beja, and claimed that Ahmed and Eastern Front Deputy Chairman Amna Dirar are "competing to please the government." Neither of them represents the true interests of the Beja people, he said. When asked by poloff who the true leaders of the Beja were, Ali stated that they are dispersed overseas in the United States, Canada, Holland, Australia, and Israel. He admitted that communication among the diaspora is weak, but named Mohamed Tahir Abubakar and Issa Mohamed Ali as among the "real leaders" of the Beja people. He stated that they are residing in the United States and Israel, respectively. When queried by poloff about Osman Bawanin,s Beja Congress faction, the Beja Congress for Reform and Development, Ali asserted that Bawanin was an NCP stooge who in fact has blood ties with leading NCP members, and close associations with Sudanese intelligence. Bawanin was being used by the NCP to divide the Beja Congress, he said.

#### SEEKING JUSTICE FOR "PORT SUDAN MASSACRE"

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14. (C) Mahmmoud and Hamid lamented the Port Sudan massacre has been all but forgotten, noting that its perpetrators escaped justice, and that the GOS has restricted media coverage of attempts to commemorate of the event, confiscating cameras and equipment. They expressed outrage that some media ignored requests to cover commemorations and singled out the Al Jazeera channel, accusing it of being

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compromised by GOS operatives. They stated that their movement held a press conference in Port Sudan proclaiming their support for the ICC referral against President Bashir, and was attempting to bring the case of the Port Sudan Massacre to the ICC in The Hague. (Note: A January 2008 report in Sudanese newspaper Al-Sahafeh describes an announcement by MP and Political Secretary of the Beja Congress Abdallah Musa that a committee had been formed at the ICC in The Hague to review the Port Sudan massacre. This could not be independently verified by poloff. End Note.) Poloff informed them that the USG was not a party to the ICC, but that it sympathized with their concerns about marginalization and underdevelopment of the East.

#### EXPLOITATIVE GOLD MINING

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15. (C) Hamid and Ali spoke at length about the economic plight of the Beja and their exploitation by the GOS. They stated that chemicals used in gold mining in Ariab, Eastern Sudan are poisoning the Beja community there, who have no access to health care. They further asserted that Beja are prohibited from working in the mine, and that all the miners are brought in from other states in Sudan. This is because the GOS does not want the Beja to know the extent of their natural resource wealth, they said. "I have seen with my own eyes police with whips striking people" who try to approach the mine so they do not see the airplanes carrying the gold out of the country, said Ali. He urged the USG to open its arms to the Beja and allow them to set up offices in the United States, in order to better organize themselves and fight for their rights.

16. (C) Comment: Its unclear whether Hamid and Ali belong to an organized dissident faction of the Beja Congress or are simply disgruntled individuals, especially given that their demands mirror those made at the general conference of the Beja Congress in Erkowait on August 15, which they claimed to have boycotted. (Note: Among recommendations adopted by the Erkowait conference were an assertion of the right to fair share to the region's natural resource wealth, compensation for those affected by gold mining operations, and the

appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate the Port Sudan incident. End Note.) The primary beef expressed by these two disgruntled Beja interlocutors seems to be dissatisfaction with the Beja establishment leadership, but they are unable to point to any credible alternatives for a possible change in leadership of the Beja Congress.

ASQUINO